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SUBJECT: LETTER TO SECRETARY RICE FROM GUATEMALAN FM BRIZ

1. Embassy received late March 30 a letter from Guatemalan FM Jorge Briz to the Secretary. Text follows in para 2. The letter argues for greater cooperation in combatting narco-trafficking, alien smuggling and trafficking in persons by providing spare parts, training and other resources to Guatemalan police and military, including FMF and IMET.

2. Begin text of FM Briz's letter to the Secretary:

March 29, 2005

Dear Madam Secretary,

It is with great pleasure that I write to you today congratulating you for your confirmation as Secretary of State. While wishing you the best personally as well as professionally in this important and challenging task that you are about to endeavor, I would also like to hope for the best of joys to you and your family in this new year.

Likewise, I would like to offer you the best of my knowledge and understanding in advancing and strengthening our bilateral relations that happily exist between both of our governments and people, and which currently are in their best historical moments.

As our countries move forward in a globalized world, threats and interests have internationalized without recognition of borders. Guatemala is going through very important changes, especially in the work against corruption and the rescuing of democratic institutions, but as you also may be aware, there are some issues -- particularly in the security arena (the fight against Organized Crime that includes Drug Traffic, Trafficking in Persons, and Alien Smuggling) -- that need stronger cooperation and understanding of allies and friendly countries. In Guatemala, the Administration of President Berger is fighting this kind of threat with national resources and the cooperation of the United States.

The spillover from the fight against these mutual threats (in which the United States is fully engaged, particularly in Colombia, the Andean region and Mexico) is forcing Organize Crime (drug lords, particularly) to search for alternative countries to continue doing business as usual. Due to our unique geographical position (border with Mexico and NAFTA), Guatemala is being used by criminals as a transit area to ultimately reach north, corrupting in their path private and public people while endangering the health and well-being of our society.

Furthermore, a new threat has arisen in our society: the street gangs (maras). The administration of President Berger, with the help of the police force, is aiming to fight and restrain this new threat. According to intelligence, these "street gangs" are not only involved in common crime but are also being used by Organized Crime (drug traffickers, traffickers in persons, and alien smugglers) to divert the efforts of our National Police.

In 2004 President Berger reduced our military in half complying with state commitments under the Peace Accords. A significant portion of the military budget was then re-directed to social spending. We were accordingly forced to engage the military (border patrols), not only in the fight against Organized Crime (drug traffickers, alien smugglers and traffickers in persons) -- who have access to very sophisticated combat equipment -- but also in assisting to control the street gangs as our yet small police force (5,800 elements) do not suffice.

Having said that and due to: (a) the dimension of the threats; (b) the different borders (Mexico, Salvadoran, Honduran and the adjacency zone with Belize) and territorial sea that need to be patrolled and controlled by the military force and; (c) the increase of common crime and violence that threaten our democratic governance and which is being fought by combined forces (National Civil Police and Military), we believe that a profound strategy between both our countries needs to be developed and should include, among other issues, the following:

1. A more thorough engagement in the fight against Drug Trafficking, Alien Smuggling and Trafficking in Persons. This can include sharing technology, spare parts for different equipment, training and the commitment of greater

financial resources to our National Police Force and the Military.

12. Cooperation in looking for new avenues to help lift the ban imposed by the US Congress on Guatemalan Military access to programs like Foreign Military Financing (FMF) and International Military Education and Training (IMET).

13. Cooperation on all fronts to our National Civil Police in the fight against (street gangs) "las maras."

Last but not least, I would like to take this opportunity to extend to you on behalf of my government an invitation to visit Guatemala at a time you consider the most appropriate moment.

Hoping to work with you in the near future, I avail myself of the opportunity to renew to you my highest consideration and personal esteem.
/s/

Jorge Briz Abularach
Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores

End of text.
HAMILTON